Statement of Faith

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About the Author:

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Introduction

During my childhood and adolescence, I wrote poems to express my feelings. During this period, I animated my texts within worlds created by my subconscious because the world I lived in bored me. I dreamed of flying through the air, traveling around the world, waving to the people I cared about, and returning peacefully fulfilled to my room.

Today, driven by my dreams, my goal is to contribute to the advancement and liberation of the seventh art, which is facing a great global upheaval. To achieve this, cinema must evolve in its approach to writing and directing. It is certain that some codes will need to be broken to reach this goal. In any case, as a screenwriter and director, fully aware of the stakes, I dedicate myself to this mission.

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1 - The Subconscious

In the book "An Actor Prepares," when Constantin Stanislavski speaks of his first successful theatrical experience, he says, "I was no longer aware of the footlights or the dark abyss of the auditorium; I was no longer nervous." During the debriefing, his teacher Tortsov Arkadi Nikolaïevitch, also his alter ego, told him, "You let yourself be guided by your subconscious, by your intuition."

What does it mean to reach the subconscious? It means allowing your mind, soul, or ectoplasm to guide you; it is detaching from oneself to reach an inexpressible spiritual state. I believe that an artist cannot feel truly inhabited by the passion for art without self-detachment and without reaching their subconscious. I felt it was important to open this parenthesis so that you better understand the rest of my reasoning.

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2 - My Models

Like any filmmaker, I have my models: Steven Spielberg, James Cameron, Christopher Nolan, Darren Aronofsky, and also Luc Besson, having followed his masterclass. I could mention others, but I am mainly inspired by these giants of Sci-Fi. I enjoy watching their making-ofs because when they discuss their successes, I absorb them, and when they talk about their failures, it reminds me they are human like everyone else. I then try to understand their failures. The goal is not necessarily to find the solution, but rather to gain maturity and develop automatic responses to face difficulties positively.

It must be understood that there is nothing exceptional about reproducing what has already been done; what is exceptional is achieving what others could not. Finding that spark, that shot, that technique, that direction, that set, that detail which constitutes the balance necessary to achieve the desired effect. In short, I am among those directors who love challenges.

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3 - The Screenplay

The success of a work does not depend solely on directing; it begins upstream with the writing of the screenplay. Every respected screenwriter and director knows that the

success of a work relies on details. Imagine forgetting a key ingredient in a recipe; chances are the dish will be inedible. A film is the same: if we ignore the detail that gives meaning to the work, we risk offering something empty and dimensionless to the audience.

Consider the cliché of a prisoner alone in his cell begging to be freed. The detail that would make the scene stronger is that the prisoner is in the prison yard, watching a bird fly overhead with longing. The bird is the detail that makes the situation deeper, even psychic, mystical, and spiritual. He no longer needs to shout his desire for freedom; the environment, the action, and his gaze are enough to understand and feel his longing and distress. A striking example is Steven Spielberg's 1994 film "Schindler's List," where Liam Neeson portrays a character whose "moral" transformation is brilliantly conveyed through his gaze.

This example shows that one must not neglect these details that strengthen the substance of the work. The substance, beyond consolidating the meaning of your text, is the message, the moral, the soul or spirit of your film, and it allows it to grow and evolve throughout its existence.

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4 - Working on the Substance of a Script

The substance of a story allows one to feel things rather than materialize them; it is a psychic, mystical, and spiritual bridge between the work and its audience. The story and its content materialize the work: actions, reactions, settings, atmosphere, and timing.

If the substance of your work is well treated, every time someone watches it, their perception will adapt according to their state of mind.

Even if the director is not the author of the script, it is obvious they must review it thoroughly to find the details that will give the work more dimension. Here, the difficulty is that the detail is not only in the form but also in the substance. I have read scripts carefully treated in form but neglected in substance. That does not mean the script is bad, only that if the substance is sloppy, the story loses all interest. At this level, it seems almost evident that working on substance must be treated as a separate discipline.

A script whose substance has not matured is like depriving the work of its soul or spirit. Without it, the message cannot be effectively conveyed. On the other hand, it is not

enough to add elements that enrich the story; one must also know how to measure, shape, and treat them correctly.

The substance of the story is, in a way, the mystical, psychic, and spiritual dimension of the work, the detail that helps convey the message harmoniously to the audience. If this detail is so complex to handle, it is time to consider substance work as a science in itself within screenwriting.

Thus, if a screenwriter cannot properly handle substance, they must rely on someone capable of doing so. The intervention of this third party does not diminish the screenwriter's merit. However, substance work is beyond a script doctor's role, who only works on technical aspects: scenes, continuity, logic, structure, etc.

Renowned directors, of course, are all capable of handling the substance correctly; the impact of their works on the audience proves this. Achieving this level of excellence requires not just experience and talent, but a vision and a universal ideal. I understand Luc Besson’s disappointment when, in 1998, his film "The Fifth Element," with a strong message, was awarded five César awards but did not receive Best Director.

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5 - The Spiritual Dimension of the Script

To expand on this, I rely on an example that has transcended millennia and continues to influence populations: convictions.

Why this example? Because regardless of the form—atheist, monotheist, polytheist, pagan—they are part of billions of people's daily lives. Their popularity exists for a reason: they convey messages that resonate with followers. The essential point is that all parameters allowing people to attach to these messages are contained in the substance. All forms of convictions consist of rules, ideals, struggles, and moral values leading often toward spirituality. Therefore, if I want my film to have impact and become a reference like a religion, the substance must carry equal strength, or "spirituality." An illustrative example is James Cameron’s 2009 film "Avatar," which creates a unique mystical universe where everyone finds themselves.

A work must captivate, give hope, comfort, and guide the audience. In short, through their work, the filmmaker must offer content that allows the public to identify and gain a new vision of life. If the film achieves this, its message will adapt to the audience's mindset. Like a religious person seeking comfort in sacred texts, a film must have the same impact and effect. The audience must sanctify the work, and for this, the substance must be treated with psychic, mystical, and spiritual intelligence.

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6 - A Credible Script Requires Harmony Between Substance, Form, and Technique

Now I would like to discuss the link that must exist between substance and action. Technical aspects must align with the substance: actions, locations, plots, and symbols must match the substance; otherwise, paradoxes will frustrate the audience. If the film does not reflect the moral it aims to convey, it loses the audience. A film may be a gem, but if substance and action do not align, the story becomes chaotic.

Substance forms the foundation, the sap of the text, allowing collaborators to identify with it, understand the universe, and follow where the story leads. If everything aligns with the substance, even if the audience disagrees, they will still appropriate the work. The story is the support, never the reverse; otherwise, it would be like actors miming emotions instead of living them.

In short, substance constitutes a work's credibility; if sincere, story and action naturally adapt. Christopher Nolan’s 2000 film "Memento," with its backward narrative, captivates through the chemistry between substance and action.

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7 - The Authenticity of Content

The story content must be authentic. It must consider all societal layers impacted by the theme, regardless of culture, identity, origin, ideal, or belief. Content must serve as a crossroads, a tool allowing the audience to connect with the work regardless of viewpoint.

All elements must be verified; otherwise, the screenwriter risks falling into clichés and losing credibility. Many contemporary films addressing cultural themes lack depth, inserting contrived drama with no basis in the theme’s dogma, which audiences detect and critique. Noah (2014), co-written and directed by Darren Aronofsky, disappointed critics and audiences. Despite portraying a mythical character, the film lost credibility due to gratuitous fantasy and nudity. With a budget of nearly $130 million, it demonstrates the importance of substance.

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8 - Nudity in Cinema

Regarding love and nudity scenes, the theme must justify their inclusion. When writing such scenes, one should give actors interpretive space. Nudity must be essential to the story, as actors put aside modesty and dignity. If not a key scene, simple gestures, static or moving shots, glances, and intentions can convey the emotional or physical link. I prefer a human and psychological approach to ease actors and benefit the work. Excessive nudity may affect casting, as key actors might decline roles.

Hollywood (2020) by Ryan Murphy shows modesty and freedom in nudity depiction. Even extras are filmed with careful angles and lighting.

"If not a master scene, simple gestures, static or moving shots, a glance, an intention can convey the emotional or physical link between characters."

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9 - The Three Levels of Screenwriting

Screenwriting occurs on three levels: 1) the story and all its components, 2) the technical tools coordinating the narrative, 3) the machinery uniting levels one and two to effectively convey the author's message. I call this third level the psychic, mystical, spiritual machinery—the level where the moral is shaped. A script without this level is like holding a lifeless doll.

"The spiritual machinery is what animates the first two levels."

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10 - Conclusion

Cinema must evolve and gain new momentum. We must build new foundations alongside existing ones. Cinema must consider the audience's moral needs. To achieve this, we must revise our conception of writing and directing. The detail I aim to convey on screen to achieve my goal is the substance or third level, which I call the spiritual machinery.

Bringing a story's moral to life requires solid work on its substance.

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